

UT News

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****National diabetes study opens hotlines
for potential volunteers

DALLAS -- A new telephone hotline is available for immediate screening of potential volunteers for the Diabetes Control and Complication Trial (DCCT), a research study sponsored by the National Institutes of Health at various locations around the country. Local trials are being run at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Dallas in the office and labs of Dr. Philip Raskin, professor of internal medicine.

"This is an exciting new way for people who have insulin-dependent diabetes to find out quickly whether they qualify for the DCCT, one of the most important studies in the history of diabetes research," said Dr. Oscar Crofford, chairman of the national DCCT Study Group.

The DCCT is comparing the ability of different kinds of insulin treatment to prevent or slow development of diabetic complications of the eyes, kidneys and nervous system, said Raskin. Volunteers must have had insulin-dependent diabetes for 15 years or less, be taking no more than two insulin shots a day and be between the ages of 13 and 39. Patients accepted for the study will receive their medical care for diabetes at no cost for up to six years.

The hotline, which is based at the DCCT Coordinating Center in the Biostatistic Center at George Washington University in Rockville, Md., screens volunteers by asking simple questions. If the caller is eligible for the study, he or she will be put in touch with the nearest of the 27 U.S. and Canadian DCCT clinical centers, including the Dallas health science center.

Potential study volunteers are urged to call the toll-free number (800-522 DCCT in the United States, and 800-533 DCCT in Canada) for pre-screening. The numbers operate 24 hours a day.

These 800 numbers are answered by a system that converts any dial or touch-tone telephone into a simple computer terminal, said Crofford. A recorded voice answers the phone and asks callers three questions, one at a time. To each question, callers may respond by dialing or touching 1 for "yes" or 3 for "no."

The hotline responds to a "yes" by asking the next question. Callers answering "yes" to all three questions are told they meet the basic qualifications for DCCT volunteers and are asked to leave their names and addresses to receive further information by mail. This information packet will include the name and address of the nearest center and a person to contact.

The system reacts to a "no" response with a message expressing regret that the caller does not qualify and suggesting resources for more information about diabetes.

Crofford says that more than half of the 1,400 patients needed for the study are already enrolled, but there is still a long way to go before the needed number of participants is found.

For information about the program in the Dallas area, potential volunteers can call 214/688-3497.

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NOTE: The University of Texas Health Science Center at Dallas comprises Southwestern Medical School, Southwestern Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences and the School of Allied Health Sciences.